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ABSTRACT

Anthropological suggestions for educational research are contrasted with the psychological and sociological approaches to the study of education. The statement of problems in educational research when education is defined as cultural transmission implies equal interest in all parties involved in educational systems and transactions, as well as in the social context within which learning takes place. In research anthropologists move beyond interests in the cognitive and affective domains of childhood experience and include the study of patterns of cultural transmission. The strategies of ethnography and ethnology are basic to anthropological research, which is described as both experimental and holistic. Several studies related to educational systems are cited as making significant contributions to our understanding of educational systems and processes, and a bibliography is included. (Author/SHM)

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF ANTHROPOLOGY TO BASIC RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

I. Some Implications of Defining Education as Cultural Transmission

II. Anthropological Strategies for Educational Research

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Introduction

The limited claims of a special contribution to educational research from anthropology may well be seen as an extension of past efforts directed by psychology and sociology, the two disciplines that have dominated this field of inquiry, and which also attempt to deal with the totality of man's experience. I will, therefore, try to contrast anthropological suggestions for educational research with what I believe have been the constraints imposed by psychological and sociological approaches to the study of education. In this way I would like to extend the questions that are asked about education and the methods by which answers will be sought.

In many ways our academic disciplines as social collectivities are like the primitive tribes with which anthropologists have traditionally dealt. They are composed of people who identify themselves and are identified by others as belonging to a particular tribe. Each disciplinary "tribe" has a certain territory, a language, a set of rules for guiding behavior, a mythology, a pattern for cultural transmission, a process of initiation, a social order, a series of rituals, and a system of social stratification.

In academia--or more specifically the modern university--disciplinary loyalties are strong and meaningful to many individuals and the physical and social structure of the university is usually built around these "tribal" groupings.

While anthropologists have not studied academic disciplines in these terms, I would like to use the tribal model in order to avoid questions of the logical division of our social science "turf." It is not then necessary to argue the uniqueness of our contributions to research on education--it is only necessary to describe what has been and what might yet be done under the banner of anthropology.

Lest the idea of applying anthropology to educational research be seen as something new, I would like to mention that a paper similar to mine was

given in Philadelphia at the 1904 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. It was entitled "Ethnic Factors in Education." Edgar L. Hewett, its author, saw it as a way of bringing together the fields of anthropological and educational research. (1905) In a note published earlier in the American Anthropologist (1904), which also published his AAAS paper, Hewett had specifically suggested a joint meeting of the newly formed National Society for the Study of Education and the American Anthropological Association, under AAAS auspices, in order to "contribute to the progress of both." He believed that anthropology "needs closer definition by the masters, and its literature must be brought to a state that will place it in closer relations with education, through the schools of pedagogy, normal schools, and teachers' institutes."

Hewett's two concerns continue to be themes which attract anthropologists to the study of education. The first was the involvement of anthropologists in the construction of curriculum units for presentation in elementary and secondary schools. Such involvement seems to lead anthropologists to ask significant questions about the social institution of the school.

Hewett's major theme was that of ethnic differences in a system of common schooling. He was worried about the educational aims of Americanization among American Indians and Filipinos and wanted to bring anthropological attention to educational programs for these subject peoples. He must have been corrupted by some educational background since he proposed an administrative solution--joining the then Federal Bureaus of Education and American Ethnology.

The reassertion of ethnic identity in the United States has again made us aware of the interaction of ethnic identity with school experience and it was, in part, the interest of anthropologists in contributing to school-based ethnic studies programs that led to the formation in 1968 of the Council on Anthropology and Education within the American Anthropological Association.

Anthropologists, however, waited more than half a century before seriously taking up Hewett's proposal to explore their joint interests with

educational researchers. Since a conference of anthropologists and educators organized by George Spindler in 1954 at Stanford, however, we have seen a substantial growth of interest in this area. (Spindler 1955)

Let me then describe some of the contributions which the exotic culture of anthropology can make to the study of education. In this presentation I will focus on two areas. The first are the implications for stating problems in educational research when education is defined as cultural transmission. The second will suggest alternative strategies for educational research based upon the work of some anthropologists who have conducted significant studies in education.

I. Implications of Defining Education as Cultural Transmission

From an anthropological point of view, education is cultural transmission. Culture, itself, is often defined in essentially educational terms as "the shared products of human learning." More precisely, and from a psychological orientation, culture can be seen as "standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it." (Goodenough 1963:258-9) Thus culture encompasses patterns of meaning, reality, values, actions, and decision-making that are shared by and within social collectivities. A culture is not, in this view, a group of people nor even a complete system of human behavior. It is a conceptual abstraction that helps us to analyze individual human behavior as that behavior is shared among groups.

To look at education as cultural transmission implies, therefore, a set of basic assumptions about the unit of our interest. It is no longer the individual, but a human group which shares a common cultural system. Our information must come from individuals but is based upon their social perceptions and interactions. Our analysis should suggest the social structures and functions of the accepted patterns for transmitting culture.

Because anthropologists are so often connected with the study of social tradition, I must add that cultural transmission includes both the transmission

of tradition from one generation to the next, and the transmission of new knowledge or cultural patterns from anybody who "knows" to anyone who does not. We can, if you will, distinguish between enculturation as the process of generational continuity and acculturation as the process of individual and group change caused by contact with differing cultural systems. We ought also to acknowledge the dynamics of cultural systems in transmission. Robert Redfield thus spoke of education as "the process of cultural transmission and renewal." (Redfield 1963:13)

Applying the concept of education as cultural transmission in our educational research suggests that we will be equally interested in all parties involved in educational systems and transactions, as well as in the social context within which learning is presumed to take place. Beyond the intentions of a teacher, his manipulation of a learner, and the changes in the learner's behavior, we will want to know the meanings which the participants attach to their participation in the educational act, the extent to which and with whom these meanings are shared, and the degree to which idiosyncratic behavior is reflective of shared understandings. Education as cultural transmission is viewed as a social process occurring within social institutions. The background of our anthropological studies in isolated social systems is helpful for understanding the mechanisms and meanings of cultural transmission--but we cannot apply the original model of culture directly to modern mass social systems.

Few contemporary social systems exist in the kind of cultural isolation which was once assumed in ethnographic studies of American Indians, Africans, and Pacific Islanders. While anthropological studies have only recently reflected the understanding of the interrelatedness of contemporary social systems--it is important that the original concepts and methods of study are being adapted to studies of the many interrelated socio-cultural systems of modern mass societies. Such systems do not command the exclusive loyalties of all participants but share their affiliation in both competitive and complementary relationships with other socio-cultural systems. For instance, national, ethnic, professional, religious, generational, and even sexual identities reflect socio-cultural systems to which we belong.

As Charles Valentine has suggested, (1968:1) use of the culture concept itself in anthropology implies three major assumptions:

1) culture is universal--all men have cultures and, therefore, share in a common humanity,
2) culture is organized--there is a coherence and structure among the patterns of human behavior and meaning, and
3) culture is the product of man's creativity--it is the collective product of human experience and shared interpretations of that experience communicated within specific groups.

But the concept of culture also involves three seeming paradoxes related to these assumptions of universality, structured organization of cultural systems, and man's cultural creativity. They indicate the difficulties which some researchers have had in using the culture concept.

1. Culture is universal in man's experience, yet each local or regional manifestation of it is unique.
2. Culture is stable, yet culture is also dynamic, and manifests continuous and constant change.
3. Culture fills and largely determines the course of our lives, yet rarely intrudes into conscious thought. (Herskovits 1948:18)

It has not been always acceptable, even among anthropologists to use culture as a basic concept for defining the discipline's territory in the realm of human behavior analysis. For our purposes here, however, I believe that it underlies a major contribution of anthropology for research on education.

The implications of a cultural concept of education for the social institutions, processes, and organizations more commonly and narrowly labeled as education by professional researchers in education will be suggested below. Anthropologists following their own interests in education and culture would not limit their concerns to the cognitive and affective domains of childhood experience, usually in modern school settings, with explicit educational purposes or behavioral objectives. What is appropriately labeled "basic" research in education, the anthropologists may see as the "applied" aspect of

his discipline. He would for his own purposes look for patterns of cultural transmission wherever they occur--as Gladwin did recently in a study of traditional navigational skills on the small Pacific island of Puluwat. (1970)

The following seven implications to be suggested for educational research are neither logically free of overlap nor obviously inclusive of all the suggestions that might be made. I offer them as suggestive of the usefulness of an anthropological approach to the conceptualization of research problems in education.

Firstly, there is what might be labeled the anthropologist's "declaration of intellectual equality." It comes from both the concept of culture and the objective stance of cultural relativism associated with anthropological research. (Cf. Herskovits 1948:61-78)

One of the more recent groups of anthropologists to consider the scope of anthropology included first in its list of larger intellectual contributions of the discipline "the conviction as to the essential intellectual equality of all large groups of mankind irrespective of their biological characteristics." (Smith and Fischer, 1970:17) The universalistic implication of culture means that all people participate in one or more cultural systems. Those who would speak of "cultural deprivation" among well-enculturated residents of our central city neighborhoods are not speaking the anthropologist's language and use him in their footnotes only to their own peril. Some of our urban ethnic groups can rather be seen as subjects of a narrow cultural imperialism as they participate in our urban social institutions like the schools, the courts, and the social welfare agencies, but they are by no means lacking in culture. (Liebow 1967, Valentine 1968)

As the anthropologists quoted above said, "By documenting the enormous range of cultural behavior in societies in all parts of the world; by studying societies under culture change, both internally generated and externally fostered: and by examining the process of cultural transmission from generation to generation, anthropologists have demonstrated beyond question that the precise structure of an individual's behavior is overwhelmingly the result of learning and is preponderantly determined by the cultural patterns of his group." (Smith and Fischer, 1970:17)

Thus, one of the important contributions which anthropology is now making to basic research in education is to question the interpretation of findings of group differences in such matters as IQ test results. (Arthur Jensen (1969) If tests of intelligence show group differences, then "intelligence" is referring to a specific cultural pattern and the tests, which are ultimately the only operational definition of intelligence, are inherently discriminatory in their measure of group response. For instance, the recent work of Rosalie Cohen (1969), the Baratzes (1969), and Valentine (1971) suggest in the specific context of American Black social groups some of the mechanisms by which Blacks are systematically subordinated within both traditional and new "compensatory" education programs. The anthropological research question is, then, "In what way is the larger social system organized to perpetuate the social hierarchy?" And it was, I must confess, a sociologist, Rosalie Cohen, who went back to the IQ test items themselves to see what they could tell us of the cognitive system which they rewarded and the cognitive system which they discriminated against.

Not only are anthropologists and their intellectual sympathizers establishing the fact of systematic, or cultural, variation between Blacks and mainstream American society, they are also infecting, via acculturation, a number of psychologists in educational research. The emphases on the cultural context of learning and the cognitive implications of cultural difference have suggested new research strategies involving cross-cultural comparison. (Cf. Cole, et al 1971)

Secondly, in my list of implications for educational research, is the view that what goes on in schools is only one sector of the broad educational influences to which an individual is exposed and by which his development is influenced. The limited educational effects of formal schooling must be contrasted with the educational impact of the family, the peer group, ethnic associations, the mass media, and more formalized institutions as those associated with medicine, law, government, social welfare, business, and religion. (Cf. Silberman, 1970) Anthropologists have contributed most

specifically to the understanding of early enculturation--the influence of the family in childrearing--but the concept of culture suggests the importance of other social institutions, too.

This general view of education has been most effectively applied to the studies of isolated tribes--but it is time to take an equally broad approach to the understanding of modern man in his complex web of relationships with multiple socio-cultural systems.

This means that schools will be studied for the narrow range of their influence in the education of man and that other institutions will receive equal scrutiny of their educational functions. One of the most provocative studies of educational process in Japan, for instance, has come recently from a young anthropologist who chose to be a participant-observer in a training program for new employees of a Japanese bank. (Rohlen 1971)

Thirdly, while schools are most often viewed as social instruments for educational purposes, they are probably more truthfully described as social institutions having a life and even culture of their own. (Cf. Burnett 1970) This was suggested by a seemingly renegade sociologist in the 1930's, Willard Waller. His Sociology of Teaching (1932) still contains the most provocative outline for a study of schools in cultural perspective. The school itself as a miniature society, and the school as an integral social element of the community, are analyzed in a manner that should have had far more imitators. A research project entitled "Culture of the Schools" has, in fact, led to the most recent published collection of anthropological studies in education. (Wax, et al 1971)

Fourthly, schools need to be studied as instruments of a variety of specific functions rather than as what our educational ideology would claim for them. One of the most pervasive functions of schooling in many communities is, for instance, to serve as a boundary-maintaining rather than a boundary-breaking structure between social classes and ethnic groups. (Cf. Y. Cohen 1970 and Hollingshead 1949) Recent criticis of the schools have perceptively commented on the baby-sitting, elite status justification,

and political control functions of our modern schools. The extent to which the schools serve these and other social functions, other than education, ought to be studied as we attempt to understand the social institutions of education.

Fifthly, we might suggest, on the basis of our experiences with ritual behavior complexes in isolated societies based on different belief systems, that much of what passes as formal education in modern schools can be better understood as ritualized reaffirmation of cultural patterns transmitted earlier in less explicit ways. The Japanese have, for instance, bng credited pre-war programs of morals education for the tenacity and dedication shown by the Japanese people in their collective endeavors, including the war against the United States. It is highly dubious to me that one classroom hour per week of highly formalized instruction could have led to the social solidarity of the Japanese people. Rather, it would seem that the classroom attention to instruction in morality was primarily a ritualistic reaffirmation of a set of values inculcated in the institutions of family, neighborhood, mass media, and other institutions of Japanese society which had earlier and more intensive interaction with each child. Waller (1932), Fuchs (1969), and Burnett (1969) have given similar interpretations to their observations of American school patterns. As Bud Khlief (1971) and Ivan Illich (1970) have suggested, we might look at the schools as the new sacred institutions of our society supplanting the churches which have turned to more secular functions.

Sixthly, schools must be seen as the arena for cross-cultural conflict and other transactions between representatives of different cultural systems. The meaning of education within schools is inevitably influenced by cultural identities and experiences which teachers, students, parents, administrators, and bus drivers bring to their interactions with each other. Perhaps the most significant research yet conducted by anthropologists in education has been that directed to understanding education in settings where minority ethnic groups confront schools directed by agencies remote from their influence and experience. The Waxes pioneering study of schools on the Pine Ridge

Reservation (1964), together with other American Indian studies by King (1967), Wolcott (1967), and Wintrob and Sindell (1968) have demonstrated the devastating manner in which such schooling may systematically subvert its own formal objectives. Margaret Mead has likewise pointed to the cultural dimensions of the generation gap in our society today (1970) and Spindler has looked directly at the rural-urban cultural differences influencing the educational experiences of rural German students. (1970)

It is in the influence of ethnic identity upon students' school experiences that anthropologists are following the lead of Hewett and his 1904 AAAS paper. Indeed, the major differences in his analysis and our contemporary one is in the nature of the anthropological discipline--the schools still have the same problems and the U. S. government is still administering programs of education for American Indians and Pacific Islanders (though Micronesians and Samoans now are substituted for Filipinos in America's colonial system).

Lastly, in summary and reiteration, educators and schools must become the objects of educational studies--one cannot understand educational patterns through the students alone. Our formal attempts at education assume that there must be a teacher, live or canned, and it is this focus on teaching that does, indeed, differentiate our modern social practices of education from those of our more isolated or "primitive" contemporaries. The school, as a social institution of education, cannot be understood if students are viewed as its only output and education as its only function.

II. Anthropological Strategies for Educational Research

Aside from the conceptualization of education as cultural transmission, there are a number of differences in anthropological research methods that offer alternative strategies for educational research. Anthropological research begins with systematic objective observation of human (and now animal) behavior in its natural settings. The recording and presentation of information derived from such direct observation is called ethnography. Only after a

researcher has participated in this enterprise is he trusted by the anthropological "tribe" to proceed with the systematic analysis and comparison of his own and other ethnographic data. Such cross-cultural comparative analysis is then labeled ethnology. Unlike other social science disciplines, a great deal of effort and respect is given to the presentation--publication, that is--of the basic ethnographic data. The hallmark of such presentations is the objective non-evaluative descriptions of behavioral systems--even when they rouse strong value responses in the anthropologist's own society or personality. Unlike the journalist and the novelist, the anthropologist seeks to present his data first in terms that will confront the reader directly rather than mediating it through his own native value systems.

The presentation of basic data is, of course, mediated by the anthropologist in terms of several disciplinary imperatives, including those described above under the concept of culture. That is, cultural behavior is seen as universal, organized, systematic, and the creative product of men. Human behavior is more generally seen as having some universally shared characteristics influenced by a common biological heritage, some characteristics shared by the human groups an individual has associated with--that is culture-specific behavior, and some idiosyncratic behaviors that reflect personal creativity and adaptation to one's social and physical environment--potential contributions to cultural change.

In his concentration on culture-specific behavior, patterns of social organization and communication have a high priority on the anthropologist's energies and attention. He is variously interested in behaviors demonstrating these patterns as they would appear first to a non-human observer from Mars who would have no basis for understanding such behavior in his own past experience, second to a human observer from another cultural setting--the anthropologist himself, and third to the people who are themselves full participants in the group under observation. This emphasis on the meaning of behavior to the participants stands in specific contrast to those experimental psychologists who treat the individual subject as a black box. The

anthropologist insists on working with specific named individuals and their web of social relationships--he does not talk about "subjects" deliberately stripped of their unique individual characteristics through controlled selection procedures. His subjects become anonymous only in his reports. Even then they are usually recognizable to their friends.

Two general characteristics of anthropological research can be labeled aexperimental and holistic. These are to be distinguished from the more common experimental and analytic characteristics of much contemporary social science.

The aexperimental nature of anthropological research, much like astronomy and geology in the physical sciences, means that naturalistic description is the first objective. While the astronomer has little choice, the anthropologist deliberately chooses not to approach his subject experimentally. "What happens in the real world?" is the basic question of the anthropologist who does not define behavioral variables before beginning observations. Controls on the observation are designed to promote reliability and objectivity and to minimize the interference of the investigator with the behavior he is observing--there is no observer-controlled "experimental treatment." The outlines for defining observational data will look like laundry lists derived from multiple observations in many other societies. (Cf. Henry 1960)

The holistic nature of anthropological research stands in contrast to what might be called the analytic perspectives of psychology and sociology. (Cf. Weiss 1966) Any naturally significant human group is seen as a system of inter-related elements which constitute the underlying structure of the phenomena to be observed rather than as a tangle of related variables which can be sifted out and associated in lawlike regularities for all human situations. Variables can be defined only after observation and usually form a statement of system characteristics or taxonomy. The aim is often to contribute to a typology of systems instead of a set of general laws of behavior. Variety and diversity in human life are the basic interest of the anthropologist.

Participant-observation is the anthropologist's major method of ethnographic research. Unlike many observational studies in education, there are important elements that distinguish the anthropologist's technique. It is first important that the anthropologist comes as stranger to the group he studies. He is not an expert but a naive, unsophisticated outsider. Like a child, he must first learn the language and the social graces that will enable him to maintain communication with the individuals he is observing.

There is, of course, a dynamic tension between the participant and observer roles because the objetivity of the observer is as necessary for understanding a cultural system as is the experience of learning to share the unexamined and implicit assumptions upon which every cultural system is based.

Those features which distinguish the anthropologist's participant-observation from other observational studies would include then (Cf. Bruyn 1963):

1. The researcher is a stranger within the system he is studying.

2. The researcher must learn the language of the system which he is investigating.

3. The minimum time required for basic ethnographic description and analysis of a system is about one year.

4. The participant-observer must develop a social role within the system that allows him to become a natural part of the environment consistent with his research design.

Applying these research perspectives to what I like to call "educational ethnography," a number of researchers are making significant contributions to our understanding of educational systems and processes. In anthropological style, I will finish this report by developing a short typology of their research efforts.

First, there is the study of individual actors in formal school settings. Case studies of individuals are used to understand the roles and actions of people in formally defined social positions. Carrying the disciplinary imperatives to their logical extreme, Wolcott, for instance, spent two years in the study of educational administration by following a willing, and obviously

atypical, school principal in all of his professional and many of his private activities. (1968) He began and finished his study as the naive participant-observer--in fact his last request to teachers in the school of his administrator subject was to ask them to tell him what they thought he still did not know about their school. One teacher neatly summed up the inevitable limitations of participant-observation when she replied that there were no kotex dispensers in the faculty women's rest room.

While Wolcott's ethnographic research in this project is now finished, it will take several years for him to finish the analysis of the data. From it we should get a better understanding of the behaviors which compose the job of a school administrator and of the complex social institution of the school in American society.

Secondly, there is the study of social systems at the classroom level focussing on the social transactions that occur within the school. Smith has described this as the "microethnography of the classroom." (Smith and Geoffrey 1968) Though coming from a background of psychological research in education, he spent a year in the urban classroom taught by one of his graduate students. Together they split the participant-observer's role so that Smith could concentrate on the observation while his student was the participant-teacher.

Thirdly, there are a number of studies where the ethnographer has taken a classroom teaching job and reports from this perspective upon the classroom, school, and community as an educational system. King (1968), for instance, using both classroom and community observations, reported on a Canadian Indian boarding school. Though originally entering the school as a way of supporting his studies in anthropology, Rosenfeld (1971) later used his experience to report on the social systems of a Harlem school. In both cases, the ethnographers were outsiders to their students and they paid special attention to the meaning of the school experience for their students.

Fourthly, observers outside the usual school roles have reported on school and community relationships in particular settings. The Waxes (1964) carried

more obvious identification as researchers in their study of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation schools. In my own study of a Japanese middle school (Singleton 1967) the participant-observer role in a school was acceptably defined as researcher since all Japanese teachers were expected to develop their own research projects as part of their professional responsibility. In both Japan and Pine Ridge, it was necessary to develop close rapport between school personnel and the community--an easier task in Japan where school and community interests were more closely alligned.

Fifthly, a few anthropologists have studied wider school systems, somewhat in the perspective of Willard Waller. Y. Cohen (1970) has been interested in delineating the role of schools in what he chooses to call "civilizational states." This requires a kind of national analysis that looks at structure and function of school institutions more broadly.

Sixthly, there have been studies of educational problems that relate specifically to anthropological interests in language, cultural and ethnic identity, or social stratification. In this case, the educators' definition of a problem has been similar or complementary to basic anthropological interests. Language learning and the teaching of reading and writing have attracted the interests of anthropological linguists. Studies of foreign student experience in the U. S., like that reported by Bennet, Passin, and McKnight (1958) for Japanese students, and those dealing with contemporary ethnic identity and schooling for American minority groups (Valentine 1971) have taken up the anthropologists' concern for the meaning of ethnic identity in contemporary national school systems.

Finally, there has been a real interest and encouragement to psychologists to work jointly in the cross-cultural comparative experimentation which would make the psychologists' findings more relevant to the anthropologists' interests--and, hopefully, more universal. Cole, et al (1971) like to call this "experimental anthropology."

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